

Close is a lingerie shop without a front window

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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In 1987 the 'buddy cop' genre was well and truly established thanks to the inroads forged by Beverly Hills Cop and 48 Hours, yet still fresh enough not to have become stale and trope-worthy. Riding the bandwagon with glee, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in the driving seat, was the Lethal Weapon franchise that burst onto the silver screen to 'wreck the halls' in 1987 amidst a hail of bullets, explosions and machismo.



Opening the volley of frothy hard-edged sentimentality is the touching movie set at Christmas, that's *not* a Christmas movie. It stars the unlikely LAPD detective duo, Martin Riggs and Roger Murtaugh, who for comedic effect occupy polar opposite ends of the personality and race spectrum. Obviously they don't hit it off right away, because where would be the fun in that?

Murtaugh has a wife, home, and loving family. Riggs is a widower with a never named unborn son, and lives alone in a caravan on the beach - and even *that* he manages to lose in a helicopter shoot-out. Murtaugh is as straight-laced as they come, following every procedural protocol to the letter of the law. Riggs is an erratic Renegade who rewrites the rule book as he sees fit. Murtaugh already has one eye on retirement from the outset. Riggs is roughly 20 years younger, although his age is never explicitly revealed. Murtaugh and family have a pet cat called Burbank (and later a Westie puppy, but

that kinda neuters my point so I won't even mention it). Riggs has Sam for company, a Shetland Sheepdog. You get the gist.

Captain Ed Murphy: Wait a minute! Look, maybe these guys can contribute something to this case.

Ernie - Detective: From what I've seen of their records, the only thing they do contribute is mayhem and chaos.

Martin Riggs: No, I'm Chaos, and he's Mayhem. We're a double act. What are we, required reading, or something?

Lorna Cole: As a matter of fact, you are. It's a cross between Police Gazette and Mad Magazine.

Riggs joined the police force following a stint in the U.S. Army Special Forces which included a tour in Vietnam where he operated as a 'Phoenix Project' assassin at the behest of the CIA. As a result he's rather adept at handling firearms, as well as taking care of business in hand to hand combat skirmishes.



Initially assigned to the LAPD narcotics division, Riggs is shunted off to homicide following his misguided and suicidal approach to handling a lone gunman scenario. His new partner, Murtaugh - a weary 50-year-old veteran detective who keeps reminding us he's "too old for this chitzou" - is expected to yield a stabilising influence.

Murtaugh: You're not dead until I tell you! Got that Riggs?

A bit of a long shot given that Riggs has succumbed to a three-year-long bout of chronic depression induced by Pieter Vorstedt's accidental murder of the wife he still dotes upon.

Our eponymous loose cannon, Riggs, shows no concern for the value of his own life, and even tries unsuccessfully to directly snuff it out on one occasion. Just in case the urge should arise again, he keeps to hand a "special bullet for the occasion with a hollow point" to "Make sure it blows the back of my goddamned head out and do the job right!"

"I'm the guy that changed the course of your life, man. 4 years ago, Riggs, when you were a narc down in Long Beach, you were getting too close to us so we put a contract out on you. I handled it myself; drove your car right off the fudging road, remember? Now, of course, you weren't driving. You can't imagine the surprise. I pulled back this matted mop of blood-soaked hair to see this woman's face... your wife, right? She didn't die straight away... took a bit of time.

(Riggs angrily charges for Vorstedt, but is restrained)

Don't have much luck with women, do you, Riggs?"

Over the course of their fractious relationship, Murtaugh and Riggs join forces to solve crimes, and extricate one another from various calamitous scrapes, Riggs even saving Murtaugh's life at one point. Naturally a mutual respect and allegiant bond develops between the pair, paving the way for three action-comedy caper sequels, and more recently, a TV series.

Martin Riggs: Hey, look friend, let's just cut the chitzou. Now we both know why I was transferred. Everybody thinks I'm suicidal, in which case, I'm fudged and nobody wants to work with me; or they think I'm faking to draw a psycho pension, in which case, I'm fudged and nobody wants to work with me. Basically, I'm fudged.

Roger Murtaugh: Guess what?

Martin Riggs: What?

Roger Murtaugh: I don't want to work with you!

Martin Riggs: Hey, don't.

Roger Murtaugh: Ain't got no choice! Looks like we both been fudged!

Martin Riggs: Terrific.

Roger Murtaugh: God hates me. That's what it is.

Martin Riggs: Hate him back; it works for me.



As work began on Ocean's tie-in licensed game the third movie was gearing up for the PR merry-go-round, ultimately hitting the theatres six months before its accompanying game appeared on the shelves at WH Smith. At the box office the movie earnt a staggering \$321.7 million from a \$35 million budget, while the game failed to make an equivalent splash.

Whilst Ocean adopted Lethal Weapon 3's movie poster for promotional purposes, their small screen interpretation

actually takes its cues from the entire *trilogy*, as it was known in 1992, 6 years before the emergence of the fourth film made it a tetralogy.

Originally the proposal was to include the '3' in the title, except Ocean decided this would hamper its sequel-generating potential and so quickly dropped the numeral. Also you wouldn't want the game-buying public to be under the illusion that they were jumping into the middle of a series of games that was, in fact, a forerunner. No-one enjoys feeling lost.

Many of the critics at the time were fixated on the false impression that it's a game inspired by vague generic themes surrounding the movies where association between the two mediums mostly occurs in the mind of the beholder once the suggestion has been firmly planted by the familiar box art and impactful upper-case moniker.

In reality that couldn't be further from the truth; some of the scenarios are directly replicated from the movies with only a few minor tweaks applied to ensure they slot more appropriately into the game world. Others adopt certain settings, yet veer off at a tangent storyline-wise.

An apt example is to be found on the back of the box even before booting the floppy disk. There the text refers to "the rescue of a kidnapped girl", an allusion to the abduction of Murtaugh's daughter, Rianne, in the first film. Unsurprisingly Big Baddie Mr. Joshua and his scurrilous Shadow Company are behind the ruse to entrap Riggs and Murtaugh, a scheme that culminates in the death of Rianne's boyfriend, Mark. It appears that the rationale for this level was switched with a mission revolving around rescuing Leo Getz, but that's beside the point. *Both* story arcs are genuine sub-plots extracted from the movies. It made perfect sense to introduce the higher profile member of the cast to the

computer game rather than a peripheral character who didn't have the gravitas of Joe Pesci. Even so, someone should have communicated the update to the box designer!



Incidentally, we don't see an actual Rianne or Leo sprite in the game anywhere; we just have to imagine we've liberated them upon defeating their captor.

How the journalists got it so wrong is a mystery. Perhaps they weren't as familiar with the movies as they thought they were. Maybe they only read the back of the boxes, recognised no immediate parallels and dismissed the game

as irrelevant. Either way, they spouted a lot of cobblers, as you'll soon discover.

You'd hope that the most ardent fans of the series bought the game irrespective of the misinformation disseminated and were pleasantly surprised. Either way, Lethal Weapon is a solid - if not remarkable - 1mb platformer (a detail that mattered at the time).

It's certainly one of the better movie conversion titles in Ocean's back-catalogue, despite failing to push the boundaries delineated by a long lineage of platforming predecessors. This and its largely unspectacular reception from the critics likely explains why Lethal Weapon remained absent from the Amiga sales charts.

Even ignoring its roots, Lethal Weapon *does* I believe stand the test of time as a platformer fans of the genre relish returning to. You wouldn't recognise pixelly Riggs or Murtaugh if you passed them on the street, yet they still work as Everyman hero protagonists, switching between the lead characters whenever you enter the changing rooms located in the police station as the situation demands.



Whether or not the idiosyncratic strengths and weaknesses they were designed to possess are distinguishable in practice is debatable. Riggs should in theory be faster, a more accurate marksman, and a proficient *unarmed* weapon to boot. That doesn't leave Murtaugh with much scope to excel. Level-headedness and experience don't count for much in action-oriented computer games.

Martin Riggs: "When I was 19, I did a guy in Laos from a thousand yards out. It was a rifle shot in high wind. Maybe eight or even ten guys in the world could have made that shot. It's the only thing I was ever good at."

Don McDermott's graphics are cartoony, fairly flat and simple, reminiscent of NES platformers of the era. They're effective and charming without relying on parallax scrolling, intricate detail or an extensive colour palette to make them shine.

Lethal Weapon's graphical refinements are more subtle than that; the sumptuous ebb and flow of shimmering water in the dock area for instance. As it billows, rippling against the harbour wall, the clarity of the stone bricks behind distorts immaculately. That doesn't just happen by accident. Equivalent attention to intricate detail is lavished on the explosive special effects that illuminate the sepulchral backdrops in the Waxo Pharmaceuticals building, before fading placidly back to dusk. It's as though an off-screen war is raging and we're only privy to witnessing the fallout. That or the lights are on the blink.



Sound effects are thoroughly convincing and satisfyingly meaty, and even without embracing any of the genuine score from the movies, Barry Leitch's title soundtrack doesn't let the side down. On first returning to this game 20 years after getting it for Christmas while it was current, I instinctively knew what the opening track would sound like, and was soon

hand-drumming along to its zesty synthesized rhythm. That should tell you all you need to know about the impression it left on me in a timeline far, far away.

Continuous scrolling is impeccable thanks to coder, Mick West, who I'm sure would have appreciated the memory overhead spared by keeping the graphics uncomplicated. Yes, the same Mick West who also in 1992 made Ocean's Parasol Stars such a joy to play, and effortless to control. To a lesser degree, the same can be said of Lethal Weapon; controls are responsive and your sprites move at a nippy pace with a successful effort made to imitate real-life inertia. In fact, locomotion is a tad *too* swift for anyone who prefers more plodding platformers. Not that many would admit to this at a time when the gaming world was fixated on catching up to Sonic.

Codetapper of EAB fame conducted an extremely informative and highly technical interview with Mick several years ago which covers the programming techniques engaged to bring to life his Amiga back-catalogue. A fascinating read for anyone who shares a similar career background and has the mindset to fathom the tricks and terminology discussed.

Meanwhile, back in Lethal Angeles, the game comprises four scopious, multi-scrolling levels. Altogether they'd take an amateur an eternity to conquer, this being such a challenging, unforgiving game beyond the initial leisurely start. Even the longplay-recording pros need just over an hour and a quarter to save the day, well above average for a platformer.

Coincidentally, in 1994 programmer Mick West left the UK buoyed by the fee he earned for working on Lethal Weapon. Emigrating to LA he co-founded his own company, Neversoft Entertainment Inc., along with Joel Jewett and Chris Ward.

They were acquired by Activision in 1999, and Mick accepted an offer to work for them instead.

Levels 1 to 3 can be tackled in any order by entering the relevant room in the police station, while the fourth and final level is kept a secret until you get there and see for yourself.



Our journey begins with a botched bomb deactivation incident that sees Riggs doing things his own special way as usual, with explosive consequences. Rather than wait for the bomb squad, Riggs turns his hand to a spot of DIY and ends up cutting the wrong wire. Our heroes make it out alive while the building isn't so lucky - the unnamed 'chief' (Captain Ed Murphy in the movies) isn't amused and so demotes the duo to uniformed beat duties.

Roger Murtaugh: I got 8 days to my retirement, and I will NOT make a stupid mistake!

Martin Riggs: Look, there is no bomb in that building! I will bet vital parts of my anatomy to the fact! Trust me, okay? Trust me!

Roger Murtaugh: That's usually my first mistake!

You'll notice here a correlation with the opening scene of Lethal Weapon 3 in which Riggs rashly insists a bomb alert must be a false alarm and so goes it alone, entering the evacuated International Control Systems building to investigate without waiting for the experts to arrive.

Roger Murtaugh: I got 8 days to my retirement, and I will NOT make a stupid mistake!

Martin Riggs: Look, there is no bomb in that building! I will bet vital parts of my anatomy to the fact! Trust me, okay? Trust me!

Roger Murtaugh: That's usually my first mistake!

He's wrong of course, and so naturally does what any nut-job copper with a shaky mental health record would do - he decides to remain within the restricted area, proceeding to dabble with amateur bomb deactivation, totally disregarding Murtaugh's sagely advice.

(Something jumps on the car with the bomb in it. They stand to see what it is, and a stray cat meows at them)

Roger Murtaugh: Riggs, everyone else is outside. Only me, you and this cat are dumb enough to be in here.

Martin Riggs: Nearly a CAT-astrophe, huh?

Riggs *guesses* which wire to cut and thus the situation rapidly descends from mildly pear-shaped to irredeemably FUBAR within a matter of seconds. The bomb's countdown timer ramps up exponentially (in line with the slap-stick), forcing the pair of clowns to scoop up the cat - who moments earlier was seen inspecting the roof of the sabotaged car - and high-tail it out of there just before the building is completely demolished in a spectacle that would even have Fred Dibnah's heart racing!

Ernie - Detective: Right. Next time...

Ernie - Detective: Yeah, wait for the bomb squad! It's our job, remember?

Martin Riggs: Hey, I saved a cat. What else do you want?

Ernie - Detective: Great. I love cats.

Their punishment for insubordination is demotion, in accordance with the game's precis.

Roger Murtaugh: Seven days to retirement, I'm busted down to patrolman.

Martin Riggs: I should have cut the red wire.

Roger Murtaugh: You did cut the red wire.

Martin Riggs: No, I didn't, I cut the blue wire.

Roger Murtaugh: That's what I meant. We should have waited for the bomb squad!

Martin Riggs: Am I gonna have to listen to this every day?

Roger Murtaugh: Every day until I retire.

Martin Riggs: Well, that'll be a week too long for me.

Roger Murtaugh: My feet are killing me...

Martin Riggs: Yeah, your feet are killing me, too.

Roger Murtaugh: Well, how could my feet be killing you?

Martin Riggs: 'Cause I gotta listen to you bitch about them all day!

Roger Murtaugh: Yeah, and you're gonna have to listen to me bitch, because you should have cut the red wire!

Swallowing their pride they hang up their detective's plain clothes and hit the street to investigate what at first they assume to be a run of the mill robbery. When a sizeable stash of weapons are uncovered it transpires that they emanated from within the LA police department itself having been confiscated from arrested crooks. They soon learn this isn't an isolated incident; it's just the tip of a massive underground arms dealing iceberg that they're determined to liquefy.



Their report, however, is hastily swept under the rug as an internal investigation is already underway and the suits don't want the incompetent doublet screwing it up. To earn their superior's respect and the return of their badges they'll need to prove their mettle on patrol. Only then will they be permitted to take on the case of a lifetime, their toughest thus far. You know, the insider weapons inveigling shenanigans in case that isn't clear. This closely mirrors the plot of the third movie in most respects, with a dash of artistic license thrown into Ocean's recipe to lend the game an episodic progression structure. In the movie, while on

patrol, Riggs and Murtaugh intervene in the hijacking of an armoured vehicle, arresting one of the two suspects who is subsequently taken into custody for interrogation.



His connection to Jack Travis (a former LAPD lieutenant) is exposed, along with the disgraced colleague's penchant for arms smuggling and bumping off eyewitness perpetrators. A representative from internal affairs is brought in to investigate - Sergeant Lorna Cole (played by Rene Russo) - as Riggs and Murtaugh are reinstated as bona fide detectives to assist.



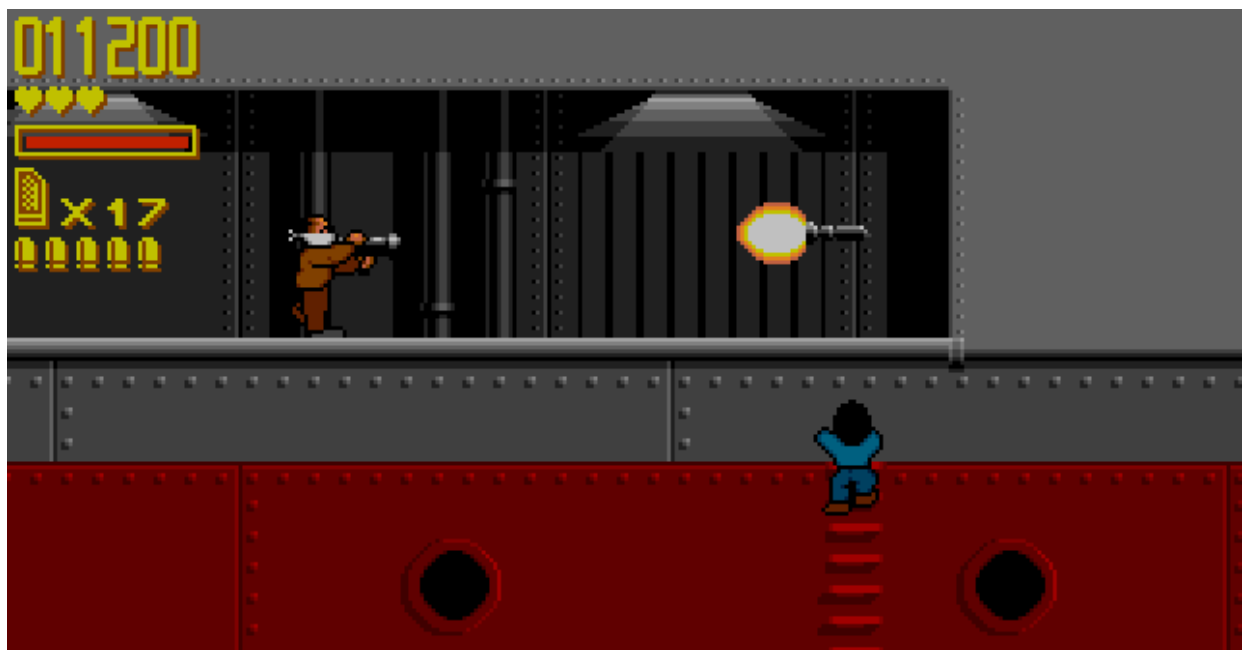
Jack Travis: You know what a future a cop has, Murph? None. You punch a clock for 30 years, retirement, pension... nothin' to do. Drunk at noon, bullet in the brain by evening. Well, not for this kid! The police department's got it all: guns, ammo, drugs, cash... it's a one-stop shopping center. If you've got the balls and the brains, there's not a fudging thing anyone can do about it!

After Travis once again eludes capture, an illegal MAC-10 9mm converted automatic weapon used to attack Riggs and Murtaugh when attempting to disrupt a drugs deal turns out to be an item of evidence confiscated from a previous crime scene. It's checked into a police storage facility in the usual official manner, only later to be stolen together with 15,000 others before they can be destroyed and recycled.

Martin Riggs: Look, that kid was a killer, alright? That wasn't a Tinker Toy in his hand, that was a machine pistol

with twin carbies and all the trimmings, man! He would've drilled you, me, anybody that came along, alright? You had no choice.

Tackling the levels requires quick reflexes and pixel-perfect jumping precision, armed only with a limited ammo Beretta 92F 6 round pistol and your feet for protection. Whenever you get too close to an opponent for your gun to be deployed effectively, you automatically switch to kicking mode. More bullets can be collected along the way, though you'll often find yourself running on empty, instead having to fall back on old fashioned brawling techniques, rather like Riggs did tying up the loose ends at the end of the first movie. Not because he *had* to, but because he's a maverick and it made for a more dramatic, nail-biting finale, as armed police stood around watching Riggs get pulverised at his own request. Funny old world isn't it.



Our first 'file briefing' is entitled 'The Export Gang' and concerns the offshore movement of a shipment of ill-gotten moolah, due to depart from a heavily fortified dock (very likely on the 'Alba Varden' as seen in LW2 which was also

stuffed to the rafters with dirty cash headed for Cape Town). Don't let the fact that the international drug smugglers responsible are operating with diplomatic immunity (much like the South African white supremacist dealers found again in LW2), that's just quibbly small-print for the lawyers to squabble over later.

Arjen Rudd: (holds up his wallet) Diplomatic immunity.

(Roger slowly rolls his head on his neck, takes aim, and fires - his bullet goes through Rudd's wallet, and then his head)

Roger Murtaugh: It's just been revoked.

Regardless of any legal technicalities, our mission is to intercept the cash before it sets sail to the launderette to be scrubbed clean, as is my understanding of crime hygiene policies. Perhaps I should have paid more attention to the explanation prattled out by career scammer and now police informant, Leo "OK, OK" Getz, played by Joe Pesci.

(after being sealed into a ship container, Riggs and Murtaugh turn on the lights and find themselves surrounded by bales of money)

Roger Murtaugh: Holy chitzou... thousands... freakin' millions!

(pulls out a handful)

Roger Murtaugh: These are thousand dollar bills! Man, with what I'm holding in my hand, I could put all my kids through college.

Martin Riggs: Why don't you take it?

Roger Murtaugh: (after a pause, throws the money down)
Fudgin' drug money, man!

Martin Riggs: So what? Do something good with it.
Rudd's not gonna need it, not where he's going.



Next up is the subway a gang of terrorists are planning to breach via the sewerage system in order to plant bombs and hold the city to ransom. Our goal is simple; apprehend the mercenaries and save the populace of LA from limb-torso separation anxiety.



LA's subway makes a brief appearance in Lethal Weapon 3, though no bombs are involved and it's accessed in the usual way; via the stairs, *not* the sewer. Aside from the bomb-planting high-jinx witnessed in the opening scene of Lethal Weapon 3, we really have to rummage deep to find the vaguest of source material inspiration for this escapade. Nevertheless, it *did* allow Ocean to introduce an energy-draining toxic ooze mechanic; an interesting twisty nuance since we're perfectly able to swim in the seawater found in the first level... assuming Jaws doesn't gobble you up!

(Roger is sitting on a booby-trapped toilet)

Roger: Why didn't they plant the bomb in Trish's stove?

Riggs: Yeah. Think of all the needless suffering that could've ended there!

(both laugh)

Roger: I'm gonna die on a toilet, aren't I?

Riggs: Guys like you don't die on toilets.

Clearly clutching at straws for wafer-thin connections, in Lethal Weapon 2, Murtaugh's home toilet is rigged with explosives forcing him to literally sit tight while his partner Martin calls in the bomb squad. It's the latter who save the day rather than Riggs, who, uncharacteristically sensible on this occasion, realises he's out of his depth and doesn't even attempt to deactivate the bomb himself, as in the premise to Ocean's game and the introduction to Lethal Weapon 3. That said, neither can the bomb squad, who only *control* the explosion with liquid nitrogen, instructing Murtaugh to dive into the bathtub for cover as the device erupts. Riggs loyally stays by his side prepared to die for his bestest buddy, their differences long since set aside before the climax of the

inaugural movie. Aww, I'm a sucker for a touching bromance story.

Martin Riggs: After all the chitzou we've been through, don't you get it? Don't you get it? When you retire, you're not just retiring you, you're retiring us. You're retiring us.

Roger Murtaugh: That's not my problem. That's not my problem!

Martin Riggs: You're the only family I've got! I've got three beautiful kids, I love them, they're yours. Trish does my laundry, I live in your icebox, I live in your life! What am I gonna do? What am I supposed to do?

Our weasely, jibber-jabbering sidekick, Leo Getz, makes an appearance in briefing 3. He's been abducted and taken to the abandoned, decrepit steelworks where he's currently being held hostage.

Leo Getz: I'm Leo Getz, and whatever you want, Leo gets.

Complicating the (obviously obligatory) rescue operation is our lack of knowledge concerning the exact whereabouts of his makeshift prison, the armed resistance awaiting our arrival and the instability of the dilapidated buildings we must traverse to reach the target (watch out for the segments of floor that crumble beneath your feet as you attempt to cross them). Going it alone against an army of trained goons, stealth should be engaged.

Analogously, Leo is also abducted in Lethal Weapon 2 the movie. However, rather than being sequestered in a dishevelled industrial building, he's taken to the luxurious stilts-mounted pad of Los Angeles consul-general and Apartheid cheerleader, Arjen Rudd. In either medium, Leo is the volatile Macaulay Culkin tormentor in distress who must

be thrown a lifeline, if only because it's within our remit to chaperone witnesses in protective custody.



Martin Riggs: Hey, hey. Did you get them? The bad guys? Are they all gone?

Roger Murtaugh: Yeah. Hey, hey. They've been... de-kaffir-nated.

Briefing 4 - the confidential file to be disclosed only after resolution of the first three cases - entails foiling the plans of the 'infamous Nosferatu gang' who have commandeered the Waxo Pharmaceuticals offices to force them to produce illegal recreational drugs. Curiously enough none of the crew sport fangs, drink human blood or turn into bats at will... although that would have been a novel flourish.

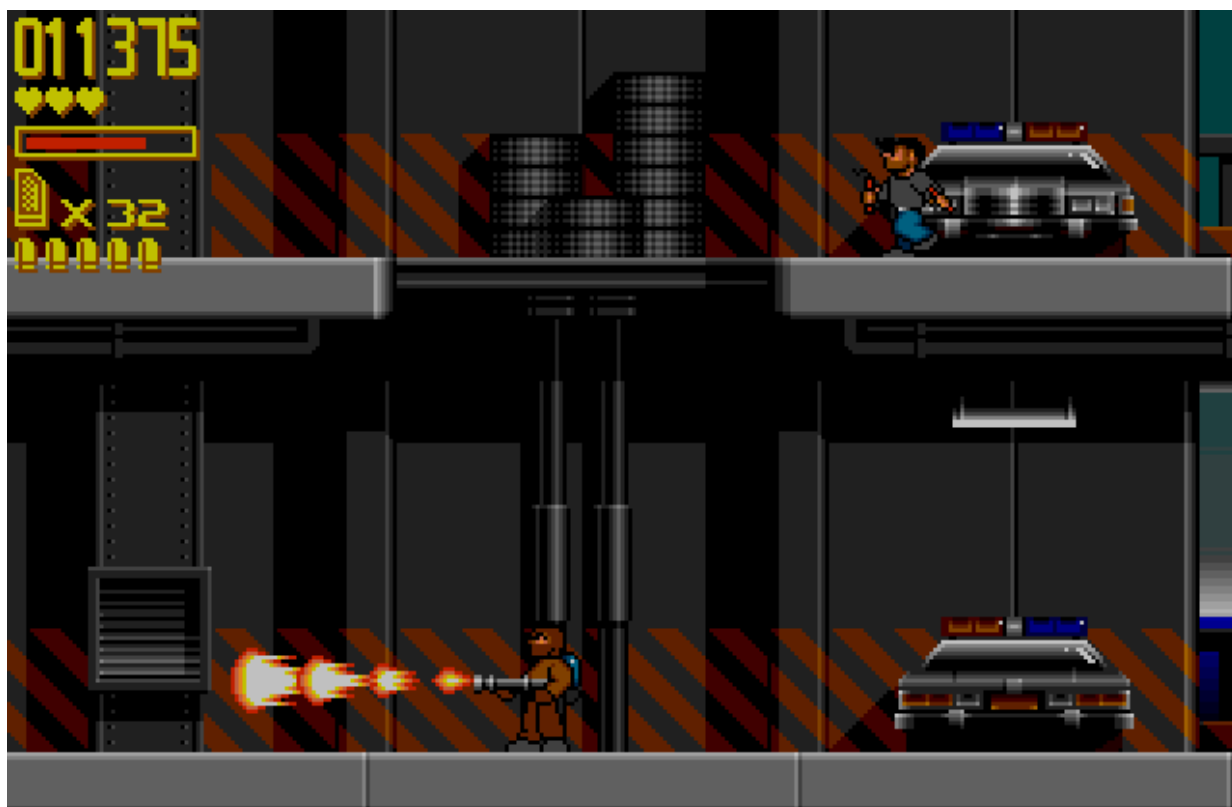
Drugs feature heavily in the first movie, aside from being a recurring theme in *any* police enforcement-related story. In particular, upon investigating the mysterious death of Amanda, the daughter of Michael Hunsaker, Murtaugh's Vietnam War pal, the partners stumble upon a narcotics lab and a shoot-out ensues. Murtaugh narrowly escapes meeting his maker thanks to Rigg's rapid-fire reflexes and the bond between them is cemented for life.

Martin Riggs: What did he mean when he said you owed him?

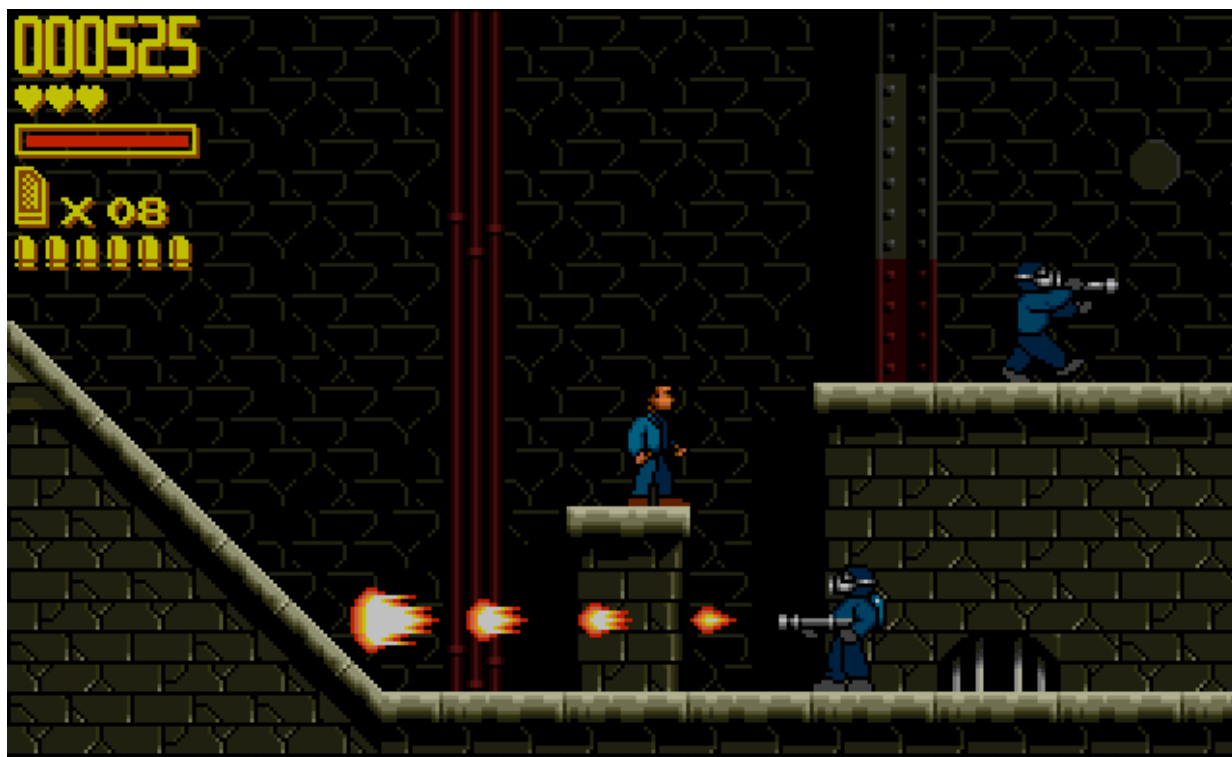
Roger Murtaugh: We served together in '65. La Drang Valley. Saved my life. Took a bayonet in the lungs.

Martin Riggs: That was nice of him.

Wrapping up with briefing five brings us full circle back to the game's prologue, as well as the basis of the movie. It's set in our second home, the LA police precinct, which is now swarming with the corrupt insiders responsible for sustaining Jack Travis' arms smuggling ring. It's down to us to dismantle his operation as well as cut off the proliferation of cop-killing armour-piercing bullets to local thugs. After all, police officers can't be expected to patrol their patch wearing double bullet-proof vests indefinitely; the ultimate fashion faux pas! Dirty Harry would never have put up with that nonsense.



Each mission is book-ended with a one on one boss battle. The first concludes with a chain-wielding, bare-chested stooge with an almost screen-length reach. At the end of the subway level there's a recycled masked assailant who drops volatile gas canister bombs. Next up is a flame-throwing, hazmat-suited goon much like many of the ordinary foes. Then there's the heat-seeking missile fiend who stalks the three-columned Parasol Stars-esque single screen guardian melee playground at the end of the penultimate level. Our final nemesis is a green-jump-suited chap with a ponytail and pistol. A bit of an anti-climax really.

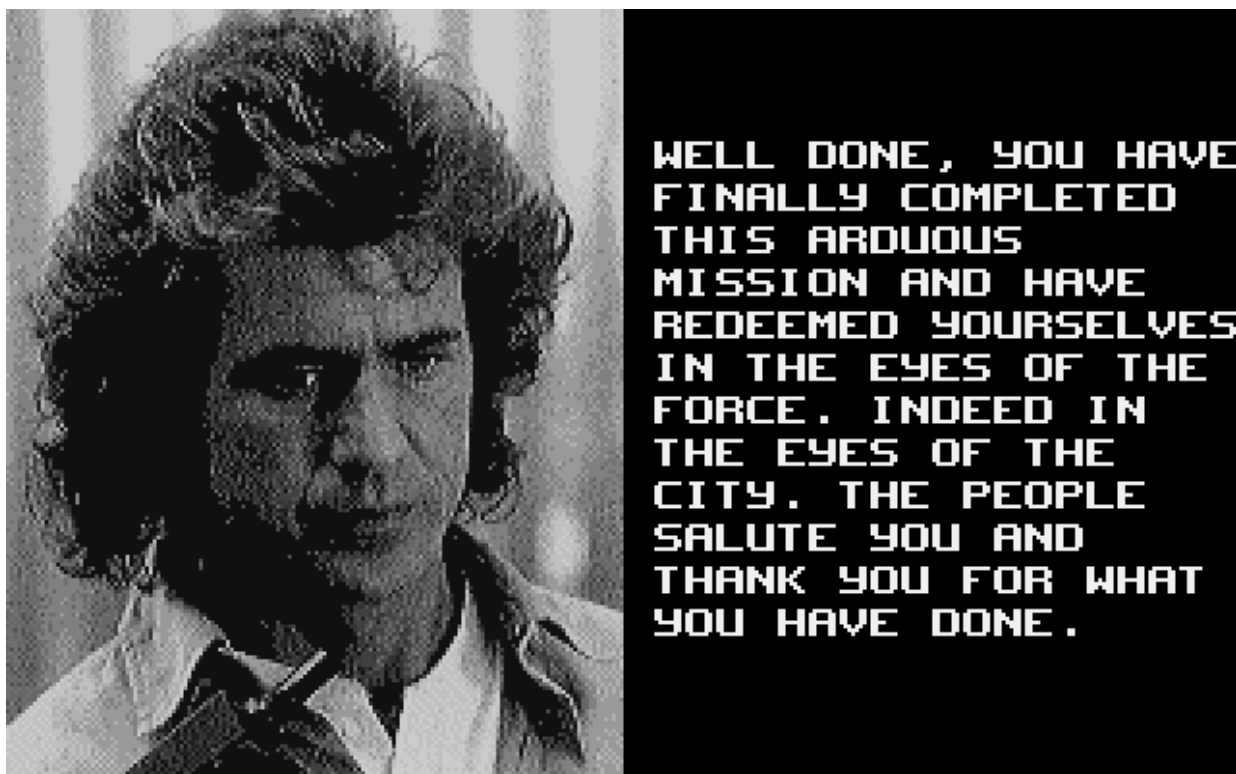


With his demise, we're congratulated for a job well done and rewarded with a series of monochrome, digitised images from the movies.



NOW AT LAST YOU CAN
GET SOME WELL
EARNED REST. WILL
MURTAUGH RETIRE NOW
AS HE ALWAYS SAID
HE WOULD? WHAT DO
YOU THINK?

THE LETHAL WEAPON
HIMSELF IS A LITTLE
TIRED, BUT ELATED
BY HIS VICTORY HE
IS READY FOR
ANYTHING.



Martin Riggs: Give this to your dad for me, it's a present, I don't need it anymore.

Rianne Murtaugh: (sees the gift-wrapped bullet with a bow on it) It's a bullet.

Martin Riggs: Yeah, he'll know what it's for.

As you'd expect, the usual genre principals apply. There are ladders to ascend, moving platforms to negotiate, switch-operated ledges to activate, and chasms to leap. There's even a Donkey Kong parody in level 3 that sees you racing up ramps bounding over rolling barrels.

Pulsating hearts can be collected for an energy or life boost (depending on their size), magnifying glasses equal extra points, whilst scavenged clips reload your pistol a round at a time, and guns enhance your fire-power.

Poles are at your disposal to reach higher ground and wires can be treated as monkey bars, shimmying beneath them to progress much like in Hudson Hawk.



Another Ocean game Lethal Weapon evokes is Addams Family - once you've spotted the slidey slopes, blocks rotating around a wireframe, swinging pendulum-like platforms, the manner in which you climb and leap between poles and the invisible platforms that lead to secret areas (sometimes set *outside* of the playfield), you'll struggle to dislodge the image from your brain.

And while we're on the subject, if you hop on top of the noticeboard in the level selection office you can access a secret room harbouring four extra lives and a cute, stunted demon carrying a trident.

Lethal Weapon being such a vastly sprawling game, an extremely welcome addition to the package is a password system that allows you to resume your game at a later date. You achieve this by entering a code into a terminal in the computer room - a neat way to avoid breaking the immersion I thought.



Throughout our journey, we encounter samurai warriors, ninjas, and more generic American goons tooled up with flame-throwers, bazookas, knives, grenades, dynamite, guns *obviously*, and not so predictably, sharks, if we dare to enter the water at the LA dockside. At no point do these feature in movies 1-3 unfortunately. Yet, as if through the future-warping mystical powers of pre-cognisance, there *is* a shark in Lethal Weapon 4, as well as a lunatic wielding a flame-thrower and some deadly oil drums!

Enemy AI can be a tad backwards at times; it's possible to sneak up behind certain enemies, and if they're programmed to only expect you to approach from the opposite direction, they'll stubbornly refuse to turn around and defend themselves, allowing you to dispatch them with minimal effort. They also make a habit of traipsing back and forth in rigid patterns making their movements entirely predictable. Their placement too is fixed, the upshot being that they'll

appear in exactly the same locations no matter how many times you restart a mission.

Surprisingly this was one factor that didn't concern the critics too much at the time - they were too preoccupied with lying about the game's lack of resemblance to the movies. That aside opinions were more divisive than you might expect for a game so easy to get a handle on in a short space of time. It's not a MMORPG after all.

"Everything in Lethal Weapon feels like deja-vu, and when you consider just how many action set-pieces the films contained, it's hard to imagine why Ocean thinks it can get away with releasing tat like this. Thankfully, the days when a licensed game instantly equated a platformer are nearly behind us now, but this is a grisly reminder of the way things used to be."

64% - The One, budget re-release (April 1994)

"It's another case of nice film, shame about the game. Some brilliant potential for an action-packed affair has ended up as an average platformer that never really picks up into anything truly exciting. It has its moments, sure, but not enough to make it a recommendable game. It's undoubtedly going to be a hit, but it really doesn't deserve to be."

62% - ST Format (February 1993)

"Good unpretentious fun. It's got almost nothing to do with the movies, but don't let the name put you off. There's no reason why this couldn't have been written two or three years ago, but that doesn't make it any less satisfying to play. Pretty darn neatesque, I'd say"

78% - Amiga Power (December 1992)

"I wasn't very impressed when I first saw this game. I'd been expecting something a bit more than a platform game. Ocean have already produced more than their fair share of this type of game (Total Recall, Addams Family, Hudson Hawk, Robocop 2, and so on). A very good example of something different is the excellent Robocop 3, which is one of those rare breeds of film licences where the game actually captures the atmosphere of a movie. Despite its haggard style Lethal Weapon is still a very playable game. The levels are large enough to keep you occupied for quite a while and there's plenty to do. It's also very addictive and challenging without being frustrating.

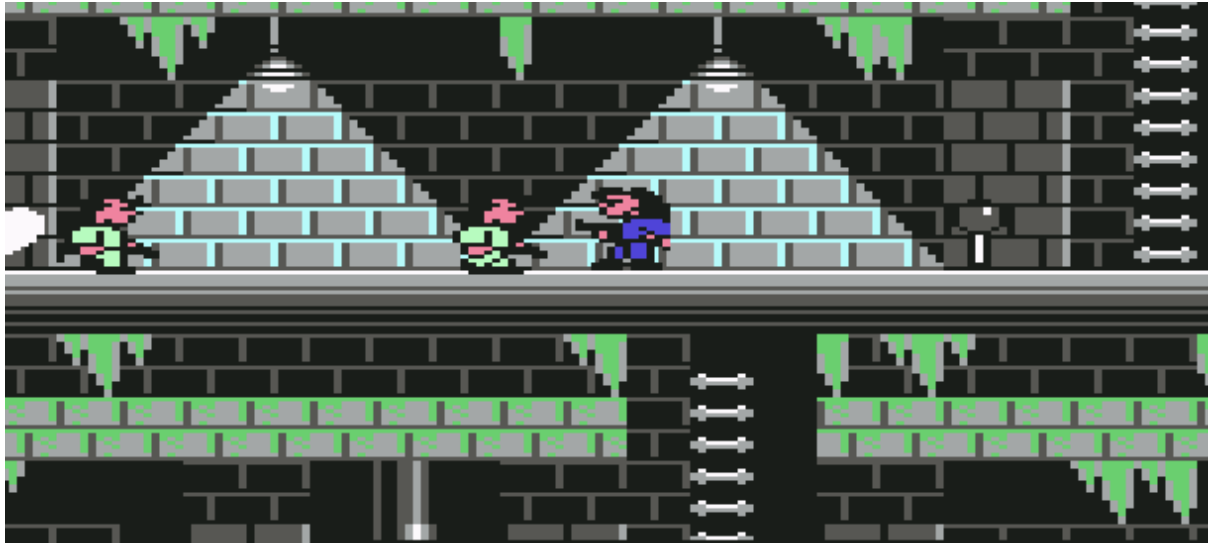
Fans of the film will no doubt be disappointed by the lack of tie-ins in the game. The movies had some excellent car chases and the inclusion of one of the those wouldn't have gone amiss. As it stands it would have been a lot cheaper for Ocean had they just changed the graphics and given the game an original title. No one would ever have connected it with the film. Having said that, this is a very good platform game, but nowhere near as good as Ocean's previous movie-to-platform game license, Addams Family.

It's likely that it will do very well in the charts, especially in the run-up to Christmas. However, it remains to be seen whether it will run for as long as the film series."

90% - CU Amiga (November 1992)

"I've looked for links between this and the movie, but believe me, there's next to nothing. The game's box says that it's Lethal Weapon, but I've seen very little evidence of that."

43% - Commodore Force (January 1994)



"Look, at the end of the day, this is just a platform game, and not a very original one at that. As an example of the genre, it's quite impressive (even though it's let down completely by the abysmal sprite handling), but if you own another platform game, there isn't much to keep you playing this one. A certain amount of care obviously went into the design of this game, but not enough went into the conversion by a long way."

40% - Commodore Format (January 1994)

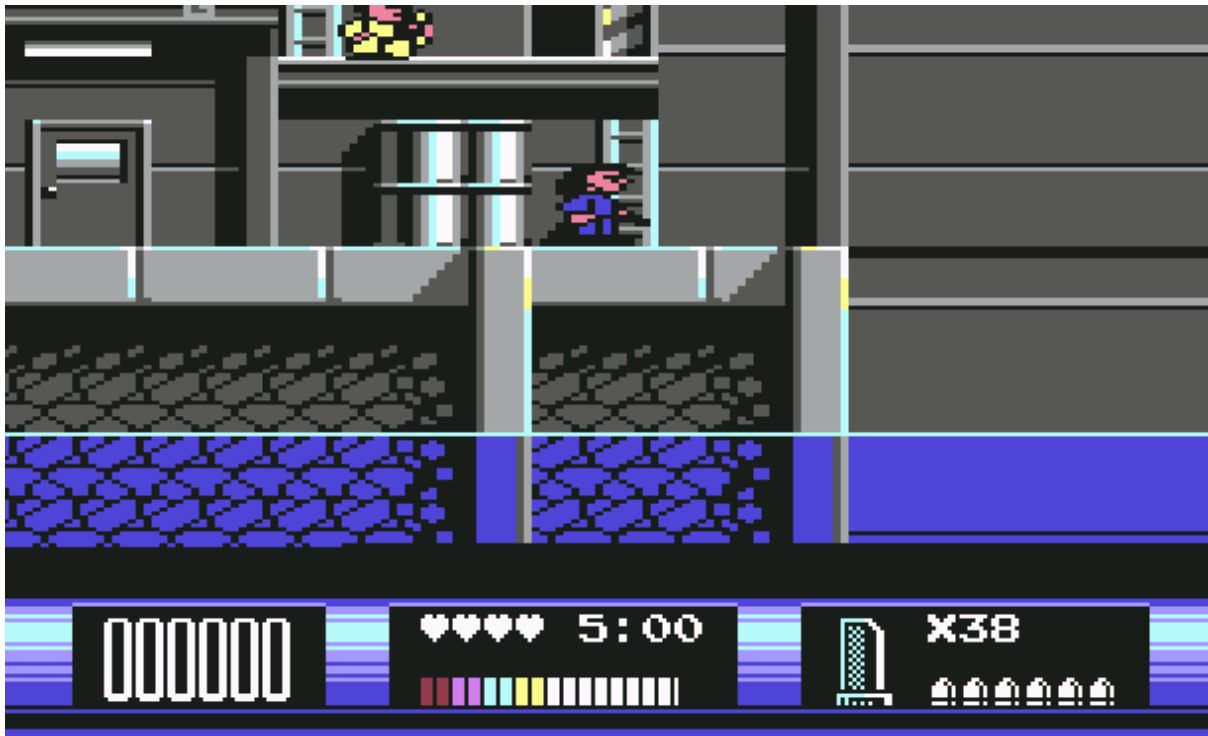


"Lethal Weapon offers you some exciting platform fun that combines thought-provoking puzzles with frenzied arcade action."

86% - ST Action (February 1993)

"There are loads of people to shoot at, and loads of them to shoot at you. But essentially there is nothing about the game to raise it above the run-of-the-mill. Maybe if you could've controlled Joe Pesci...?"

79% - Commodore Format (February 1993)



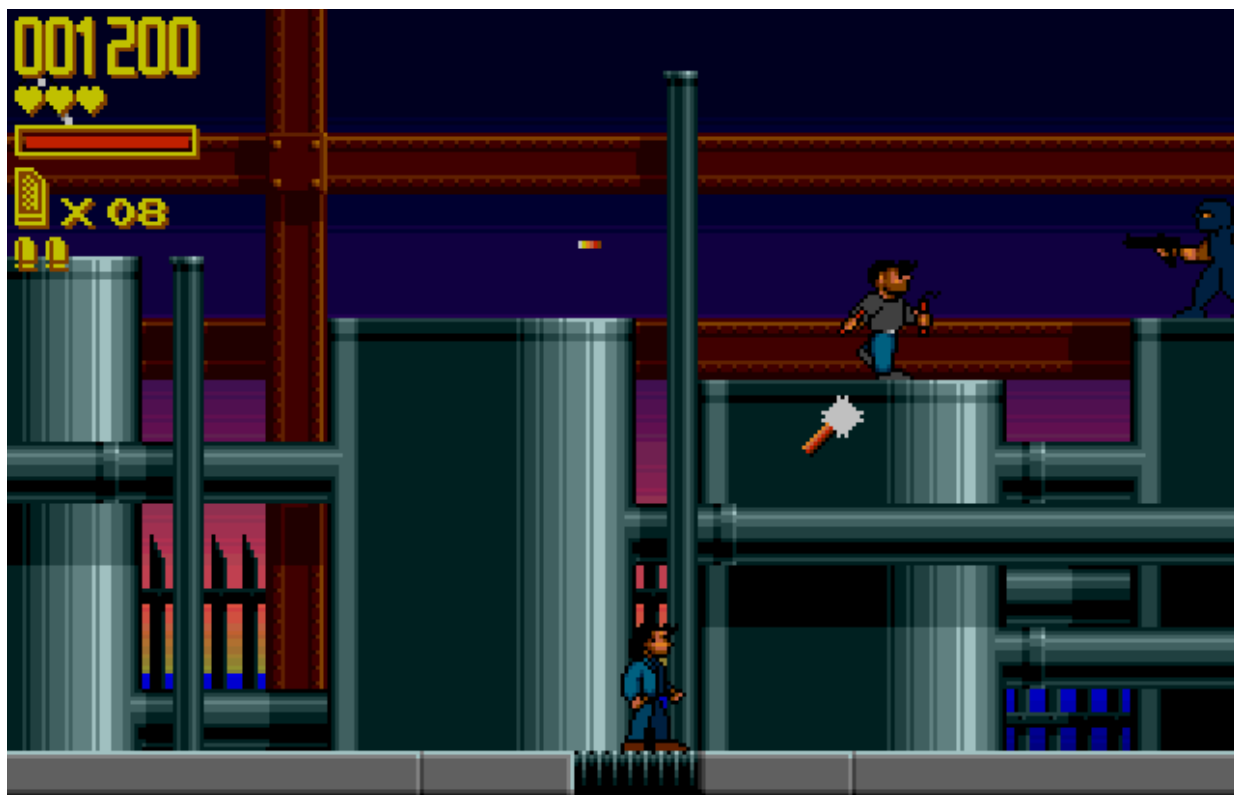
"Lethal Weapon is a game that I both like and dislike. On the one hand, it's a competent platform-based arcade actioner. On the other, it's a shocking waste of some potentially explosive licensed subject matter. Strong on comic-book characterisation and big explosions, the Lethal Weapon movies have always been perfect for action-game interpretation. A police storyline with two very different main characters - there's oodles of potential there.

Unfortunately, Ocean's game makes little use of the wealth of available material, taking the two leads and giving them irrelevant and uninspired platform landscapes to run around. In gameplay terms, Lethal Weapon is hardly any different from Hudson Hawk, Navy Seals and a handful of other by-the-book film conversions. That said, it IS a playable-enough game in its own right, if a little too tricky in places, and it would have been nice to have more control over the main character. Graphically everything is fine, and the music is

typically impressive (although not a single bar from the film score has been used, which is a shame) but you can't help but feel that so much more could have been done. Basically, Lethal Weapon is a game that suffers from a lack of imagination, and sadly another production-line offering like this won't do Ocean's reputation any favours, especially when they were just starting to put out some decent games again.

This may sound harsh, but bear in mind that, if you forget about the tie-in, Lethal Weapon is a good action game offering plenty of entertainment for platform fans. As a film adaptation, it's a wasted opportunity."

79% - The One (December 1992)



"All these niggly points show just what an ordinary game Lethal Weapon is. It isn't badly programmed, it all works very slickly and will probably give anyone who buys it a

few days' fun. But there's nothing impressive about it all - even as it stands, a simultaneous two-player mode could have rescued it. No, it's just a desperately average game that's almost identical to every other platform game you've bought, played and can now see on sale at £9.99 on a budget label.

If you're thinking about buying this because you're a fan of the films, you'll find little to link the game with the movie apart from a nice picture of Mel, Danny and the stumpy one with grey hair who's not done anything decent since Raging Bull on the box (What about Goodfellas? - Ed.) If you're thinking about buying this because you want another platform shoot-em-up, think again.

What's here is nothing new and you already have something similar in your software stash. Technically it would be at home on an 8-bit console, not an Amiga. These sort of games need to be noisy, dazzling, fast and frantic, as the console ads on TV scream at us, and sadly this game hasn't kept with the pace."

64% - Amiga Format (February 1993)



Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, and SNES gamers received essentially the same game, only varying in terms of audio-visual presentation. On the Game Boy and NES it was a different story entirely; these versions don't even share the same genre.

Game structure and level design for the DOS version is identical to that of the Amiga in spite of incorporating more primitive graphics and sound. It's a VGA rather than SVGA title so naturally, it pales in comparison.

A mostly different Ocean development team took charge of the SNES version, sans the audio contingent. Graphically it's superior to the Amiga incarnation. This is made most conspicuous by the addition of parallax scrolling and more detailed sprites and backgrounds. Just one example is the

extra pampering attention levelled at Mel's quiff; you can actually see his floppy hair bouncing along as he walks.

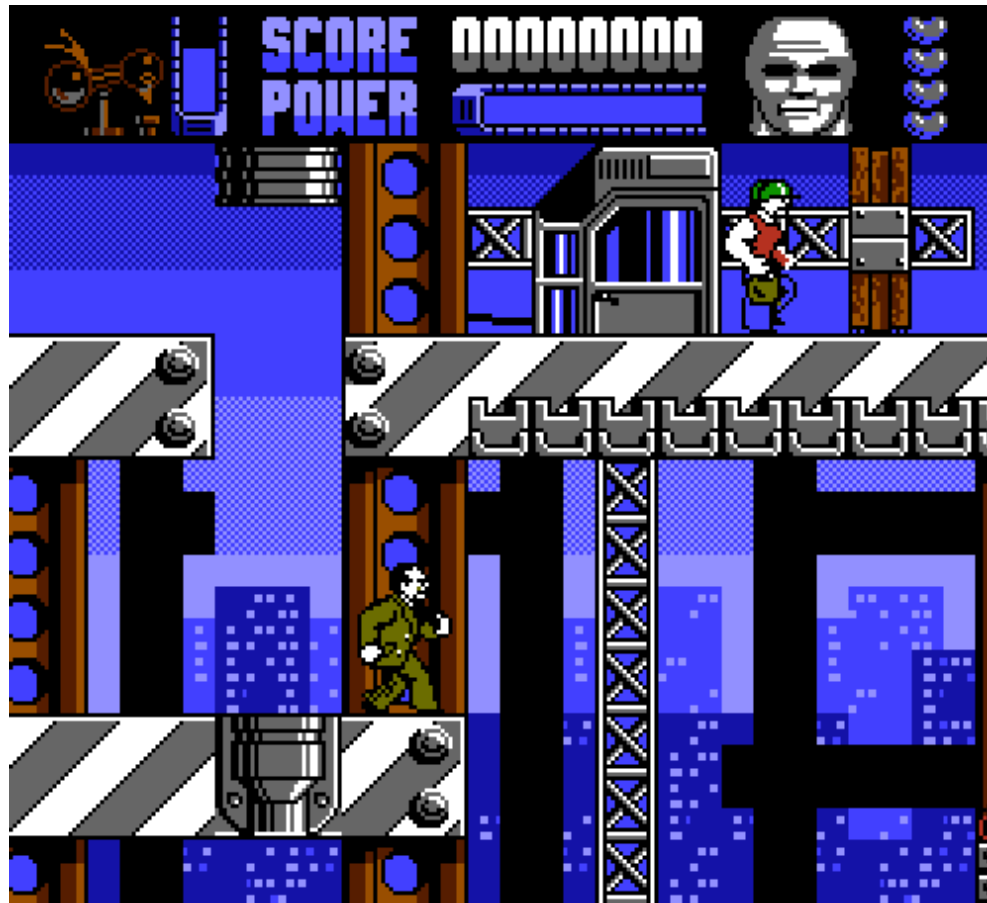
With every jump, Riggs and Murtaugh throw their arms in the air as though they've just leapt out of a plane hatch and are terminally free-falling. An animation sequence reminiscent of another Ocean platformer, Dennis, whose main sprite was designed by Simon Butler.



Each character is delineated with a prevailing strength; Riggs fires faster, while Murtaugh jumps higher. You must be wary of fall damage as in the Amiga game, though in contrast, you are immune to sewer juice.

Anyone familiar with Darkman for the NES (also from Ocean) may be able to spot the recycled construction worker adversary sprites pounding through the building site stages wielding a wrench with your name on it.





A count-down timer and continues have been introduced, while bosses are more inventive, posing a slightly tougher challenge. Level passwords aren't an option so you must complete the game in one sitting, or die trying.



Diagetic sound effects such as the ship's horn are a welcome addition, enhancing the illusion of roaming around an authentic LA dockyard, as do the alligators in the sewer... if you believe the tall tales. ;) Otherwise, the two iterations are very similar in terms of gameplay and storyline.

In the C64 edition you're unable to crouch, so jumping over threats becomes your mainstay if you are to survive long enough to be "too old for this...". In contrast, on the Amiga you can duck, yet not shoot simultaneously. A smidgen frustrating.



Your task is also made more bothersome by respawning enemies and being incapable of backtracking down ladders. It controls reliably enough and introduces some fun new tweaks like the twittering birdsong effect in the background. Our main sprites are even more cartoonish than in the Amiga version, largely thanks to their cute trundling animation. That always makes me smile.

A version for the SEGA Master System was concurrently being developed by Probe Software, though was never released, or the WIP leaked online. Only what was to be its accompanying music - composed by Jeroen Tel - has surfaced.

On the NES (and Game Boy) Lethal Weapon is actually a Double Dragon style beat 'em up, coded by Derby-based Eurocom Developments, and only *published* by Ocean. According to James Rolfe aka the Angry Video Game Nerd, it's aaaassss! Oh well, at least Neil Baldwin's superb music must have alleviated the suffering somewhat.

Walking through a leafy wooded area you reach a wall. Hop over that and you're in Egypt, surrounded by pyramids!



Tyrone: You sunk your money into this, all the way out here in the middle of the fudging desert?

Jack Travis: That's right. You know why this is such a gold mine?

Tyrone: Do tell me.

Jack Travis: Because nobody wants to live next to somebody like you, Tyrone. You're a menace to society.

Tyrone: Jack, I came out here to do business, not be insulted by you.

Jack Travis: Relax, Tyrone. Like houses, friendships need strong foundations.

You swap characters by leaving and returning to the screen via the left edge, and all the baddies are black, which is a bit of a cause for concern in terms of racial equality.

Awwwkwaaard. Let's get back to the safe territory of the Amiga version, shall we?

Lethal Weapon on the Amiga is often overlooked, sidelined as a mediocre platformer drowning in a sea of more competent swimmers. True, a lack of variety is a criticism often levelled at Ocean's take on the pinnacle of buddy cop movies, and it's a sentiment that's tricky to argue with. Once you've seen level one, what follows is only more of the same.

Nevertheless, it's so proficiently assembled and plays so smoothly that you can guarantee it will draw you back for one more go like a moth to a flame.

A two-player option would have worked wonders for its appeal and longevity, as well as capitalising on the crux of the franchise; the double act chemistry that made the movies such a prodigious box office smash hit.

Couple that with a selective repertoire of witty one-liners snagged directly from the Hollywood scripts and we might have had a sales chart storming feel-good corollary to complement the magic of its celluloid counterpart.